HOLY COVENANT
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Ronak Valobobhai

"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up."
— Anne Lamott

"What gives me hope in these tenuous times is the knowledge that there is precedent for change and there's precedent for hope. Hope has bred change again and again."
— Ava Duvernay

"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."
— Thich Nhat Hanh."

Founded in 1916, we are an Open & Affirming (LGBTQ+), anti-racist, and justice seeking church that is part of the greater United Church of Christ.

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT ~ HOPE

November 29, 2026, 10:55 am

Every voice matters: Hearing assistance devices are available.
See the ushers for a wireless transmitter and your personal ear buds.

∗ *Your whole self is welcome here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" arr. J. Carraway

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

Introit "While We Are Waiting, Come" WAITING

While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.

Hanging of the Greens Alix Felsing

One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the one who is to bring Peace?
Many: With colors of blue and the beauty and truth of God's Word.
One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the coming of our Comforter?
Many: With garlands of pine and fir, with holly and ivy whose leaves are ever living, ever green.
One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the coming Light of the World?
Many: With trees of light, which shine in the night, calling us to hope.
One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for one who will show us the love of God?
Many: With a wreath of green and candles of celebration, which will lead us through this season of waiting.
One: How shall we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Many: By hearing the words of the prophets, by opening our spirits to the songs of the season, by being aware of the presence of God in our lives.

All: Come, let us worship our God, who was and is, through which Christ will come.

∗ Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" VENI EMMANUEL
adaptation by Maren Tirabassi

O come, O come Emmanuel make true the stories prophets tell –
So all those chained by fear find release,
And, war forgotten, bring a world of peace.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Is come to birth where all God's children dwell.

O come, Love's-season, to our lonely days,
And guide us in our words and ways
To be the ones whose Advent begins
With healing earth and all that live within.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Is come to birth where all God's children dwell.

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Is come to birth where all God's children dwell.

Introduction to the Advent Candles Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

As we enter the season of Advent, we enter a time of waiting and anticipation for the coming Christ that is born among us. One of the ways the Church has marked this season throughout history is by lighting candles on an Advent wreath. The wreath's circular shape reminds us that God's love has no beginning and no end. And the evergreens placed around the wreath remind us that life continues to endure, even in time when things seem dire and difficult.

Each week we will light a candle on the wreath—one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love—until on Christmas Eve night we light the Christ Candle in the center of the wreath, celebrating the fullness and transforming joy of God's presence, which lives among us.

By doing this we remember the ways God dwells among us, bringing life and hope amid difficulty and hardship. Each candle and flame we light brings to our awareness the ways the Spirit of God is still present among us, working all things together for something new to be born within and around us.

This morning, we invite Jana Harrison & Jeff Hughes to come forward to light our first candle.

The Advent Candle of Hope — Jana Harrison & Jeff Hughes

Hope does not deny the pain of the world but leans toward the promise of God's renewing love to heal it. Hope is the quiet conviction that even when things seem uncertain, God is still creating, still healing, still calling us toward new beginnings. In a time when despair is all around us, we choose to nurture hope as an act of faith. This hope is not passive, but the active trust that God's future is already taking shape among us. May this flame remind us that we are never alone, for God's hope is alive and growing in us and through us. Let us now light the candle of hope.

[The first candle is lit]

One: In a world longing for renewal…
Many: We light the candle of hope.
One: When fear and despair draw near…
Many: We light the candle of hope.
One: May this light guide our steps and hearts…
Many: For God is birthing new life among us.

Song of Response "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" — TIF IN VELDELE

Light one candle to watch for Messiah:
Let the light banish darkness.
Christ shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.

Stories for All People — Dawn Robinson

Pastoral Prayer — Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Lord's Prayer for Advent *(unison)*

Our Creator, who is ever-present, holy is Your name. In this season of waiting, let Your kin-dom draw near, and let Your will be done in our hearts, as it is in Your heavenly realm. Give us today the bread of hope, to sustain our faith as we journey toward the manger. Forgive us for the times we rush past Your presence and help us forgive those who have wounded us. Lead us away from the distractions that dim Your light and deliver us from the shadows of fear and doubt. For Yours is the kin-dom of promise, and the power of love, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination "Jesus, Name Above All Names" HEARN

Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, Living Word.

Modern Lesson Terry Raley-Dennis

Our modern lesson today is a quote from Nikki Banas, who is an award-winning author known for her poetry, letters, and affirmations that gained immense traction and popularity on Instagram during the pandemic…

If you only carry one thing throughout your entire life, let it be hope. Let it be hope that better things are always ahead. Let it hope that you can get through even the toughest of times. Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way. Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now, and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be…Because during these times, hope will be the very thing that carries you through.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.
Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

Special Music "In the Bleak Midwinter" arr. R. Lloyd
Dorrie Hankins, soloist

* Gospel Lesson Mark 13:24-37 (CEB) Alix Felsing

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping. Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from the Gospel of Mark 13:24-37, where Jesus speaks about the destruction of the Temple and the lessons gained from the fig tree…

In those days, after the suffering of that time, the sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its light. The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then they will see the Human One coming in the clouds with great power and splendor. Then he will send the angels and gather together his chosen people from the four corners of the earth, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven.

Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that he's near, at the door. I assure you that this generation won't pass away until all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.

But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the Father knows. Watch out! Stay alert! You don't know when the time is coming. It is as if someone took a trip, left the household behind, and put the servants in charge, giving each one a job to do, and told the doorkeeper to stay alert. Therefore, stay alert! You don't know when the head of the household will come, whether in the evening or at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the early morning or at daybreak. Don't let him show up when you weren't expecting and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: Stay alert!

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: Thanks be to God.

The Good News Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

"Hope Worth Holding Onto"

Invitation to Generosity Alix Felsing

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing…

The Advent season is upon us, and we are stirred with anticipation and expectancy. In such times, what have you received that has given you hope? In what ways are you giving hope to others? Let us be reminded we all possess something of value: time, talents, treasures, even the never depletable essence of our own Christ nature. The invitation is yours to now choose which gift you will give, that in its generosity will surely give hope to the world.

∗ Doxology VENI EMMANUEL

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God above, you heavenly host.
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

∗ Prayer of Dedication *(unison)* Alix Felsing

Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received…
God of expectations, bestow upon these gifts your love and the buoyancy of hope that new things will rise. Send them forth into ashes that will become new soil, broken hearts that need optimistic balm, or the anguish that's settled upon hurting people and communities longing for justice. Use what has been offered this day for something new to be born, and to hold tightly to the hope that in time it will. Amen.

∗ Hymn 117 "Lift Up Your Heads" TRURO

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the glorious Ruler waits!
The Sovereign One is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
From earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Christ, abide!
Let me your inner presence feel; Your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;
Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

∗ Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

∗ Benediction Response "Soon and Very Soon" arr. J. Schrader

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King. *[3x]*
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Postlude "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" arr. J. Purifoy

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Today's worship service includes adaptation to our traditional Hanging of the Greens liturgy, an Advent Inspired Lord's Prayer, and liturgy written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.

Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published, please contact the church office by phone or email.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:
D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins
Ushers: Shakti Subramanian, Dave Shimberg
Greeters:
Refreshments: Roxie McMillon, Holly Middleton

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Your generosity builds a more inclusive church!
Explore secure options available online
https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/

Upcoming Dates to Remember

- **Nov. 29: Sandwich Build after Worship today**
- **Nov. 30: Deadline to register for Charleston 2027**
- **Dec. 06: Cookie Exchange after Worship**
- **Dec. 13: Room In The Inn after Worship**

Charleston Trip in April 2027 | Last call to sign-up!
A Journey of History, Reflection, and Renewal
The Racial Justice & Equity team is planning a meaningful, community-building three-day journey to Charleston to explore history, hear stories, reflect together, and renew our commitment to justice and equity. Reserve your spot for April 5–7, 2027. A group of 30 is required for the team to book this trip, **and sign-ups and deposits will need to be submitted by November 30th.** See the table in the gathering room for more information.

Fourth Annual Cookie Exchange | Dec. 6

Attention All Bakers! Dust off and select your favorite cookie recipes and join us for the fourth annual cookie exchange after worship on Sunday, Dec. 6. Share your favorite cookie and get to bring home some new ones! We will make accommodations for the choir members needing to get to rehearsal. Please join us! Look to reply with the SignUpGenius. There will be boxes to take your goodies home.

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044CA4AE22A3F8C16-67783123-fourth

- ❖ Bring a minimum of 2 dozen cookies – homemade or store bought are welcome. 2 dozen will go to the cookie swap. The extras will go to the neighbors joining us December 13th for Room In The Inn.
- ❖ If you bring homemade cookies, please bring a copy of your recipe. We will take a picture of it and email all the recipes to the participants.

Holiday Love Offering for Our Staff Concludes Today

Recognize the efforts of our church staff

During this joyful time of year, we ask you to consider contributing to a holiday love offering to be divided among our dedicated staff members who work hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, and spiritual renewal. No gift is too small, and all are appreciated.

If you choose to give, offerings can be made via any of these methods:

Venmo: @mbbomely
PayPal: Martha.Bomely@gmail.com
Zelle: 7048040640

Offerings of cash or checks made payable to Dawn Robinson. Please do not make checks out to the church. We will distribute our gifts on December 20th (Music Sunday).

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to **prayers@holycovenantucc.org.**

Members

Martha Battles & family in the recent death of her aunt, Joan Daniels
Mel Andersen, Darline Warren Batton, Jeffery & Kevin Edwards-Knight, Teresa Eller, Kathy Habel, Faye Humphrey, Wiley & Marlowe Morris, Jean Raley-Dennis, Anita Taylor, Alice & Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

Janice Stack & family in the recent death of her husband, Ed (Martha Bomely)
Wendy Wallace & family in the recent death of her daughter, Monique Wallace (Jeffery Edwards-Knight); Farug Brown Bey (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Annette Borrelli (Wendy Pleva), Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Cecelia Ciciollo (Dom Ciciollo), April Dawson, Mario Gaetani and family (Kristen Fuchs), Ann Garret (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), Ivory Garvin-Simmons (Von & Melissa McQueen-Simmons), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Jeremy Hong (Jim Hong), Dean Horning (Melissa Noll), Judson Hulsey (Kristen Fuchs), Renee Lewis (Martha Battles), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty McKinnon (Joy Decker), Geraldine Mobley (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Robert Prestwood (Linda Carver), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Jeff & Lele Saunders & Family (Cindy Coble), Connie Stidham (Ed Vickery), Brenchia Thomas, Steve Thomas (Jeffery Edwards-Knight) Dave, Jennifer Ward (Jay & Cathy Whitley), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to prayers@holycovenantucc.org. We periodically adjust our prayer list. If you would like to have someone added back, please contact the office.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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